

back in 1996. For farmers in Arkansas, Freedom to Farm has been a disaster because they depended too much on the ability to be able to negotiate trade. We put our farmers in a position where, as we said we were going to ratchet down the Government support and the Government safety net, were they going to have to depend on the market.

We gave them flexibility. Flexibility was great, but flexibility without the backbone in trade does them no good, particularly in a time when we are seeing record lows in commodity prices.

Farmers are getting paid right now the same they were being paid in the early 1940s, and yet their input costs are the highest they have ever been. They are making the same they were in 1940 when a combine probably cost them about \$15,000 to \$25,000, and now they are paying anywhere from \$180,000 to \$200,000 for a combine.

Arkansas farmers and farmers around the country have been in limbo year after year, waiting for Congress to pass emergency spending bills. The existing farm policy is absolutely inadequate. A farmer cannot just go to the banker and say, I think Congress is going to provide us an emergency spending bill this year so you need to make sure you go ahead and give me that loan and maybe wait for another 9 to 12 months to find out whether or not it will be backed by the Government.

As has the senior member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, I have worked with my colleagues on that committee to write a bill this year, to get out of the Agriculture Committee a good, positive, and comprehensive bill to address the needs of our farmers. I have been increasingly concerned and dismayed as the Senate rushes to complete its business by the end of the year that farmers again will be left behind. That is why, again, I was so proud to see the majority leader come to the floor today to say we are going to take up a farm bill on the Senate floor.

The Senate Agriculture Committee, under the leadership of Chairman HARKIN, has done its work to come up with a good bill that is comprehensive, that will provide the safety net, as well as far-reaching, new, and innovative issues we need in a farm bill. They have done their job. We will bring it up on the floor.

The House has done their job in passing a bill. We can compromise on these bills because they have been created in a way that they have many similarities. We can get a bill to the desk of the President this year so our farmers, once again, do not have to go into the new year with the uncertainty and the complete unpredictability of not knowing where their Government will be.

The Senate must pass this bill before we adjourn for the year because it is imperative, as the farmers go into this next planting season, they have something they can bank on, one with a solid safety net that ensures not only the financial viability of our farmers

but also the viability of local bankers, merchants, seed dealers, fertilizer dealers, implement dealers, and rural institutions that depend on the stability our farmers provide.

The Senate bill also provided much needed funding for rural development and nutrition programs for disadvantaged families to help those parts of our Nation where the needs are the greatest. An unbelievable conservation title helps in new and innovative ways, placing the resources and efforts into proven conservation practices that our farmers know they can use to mitigate those marginal lands on which it is more costly to produce. It includes funding for research and development to ensure that America remains a technological and economic powerhouse in the coming century. It provides funding for forestry, biofuel development, and credit financing programs to guarantee sound farm financing.

The economy in this great Nation is in a delicate state. There is nothing that we can do here that will guarantee we will not go into a recession. But there is one thing we can do that will absolutely guarantee a recession. We have seen it in our history's past. That is that we allow the rural economy to collapse. If that rural economy collapses, we will be assured not only of a recession but much greater problems in our economy in coming years.

I applaud the majority leader for bringing up the issues on which we have worked. We have worked out the details. It will be of great assistance to the American people, particularly in rural America. As we begin with a farm bill that will be a great stimulus package to rural America, we can also work out the details of an economic stimulus package that will be comprehensive in helping workers in transition and also provide the tax relief that industries need, particularly small businesses, to be able to grow and thrive and increase a growing economy.

I hope that in the several days we have ahead of us and the work there is yet to be done we can continue along the road that the majority leader has paved for us in putting out these issues, that we can get some agreement that will be beneficial to the American people, and that we can all go home at the end of these 2 weeks to a holiday and know we have done our very best. That is what we owe to the people.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THOMAS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. THOMAS. I ask unanimous consent to speak for 5 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE SENATE AGENDA

Mr. THOMAS. Madam President, I have listened this morning to the conversations on the floor. I think it is appropriate that we have had some discussion about what we are going to do in the remaining time before us. I hope we can come to a little more of a cooperative understanding of what our agenda should be in the next 2 weeks. What are the things that are most important? What are the things we ought to have as our priorities?

Obviously, we have to finish the appropriations, and we have only sent about half of those to the White House. So that is something we must do. Obviously, there is difficulty in trying to complete the work on the Defense appropriations.

It seems to me it is also important that we have a stimulus package. However, having been on the Finance Committee and sat through all the talk about it, we expanded it far beyond where anyone would suggest these were stimulus programs. I suppose you could expect that to happen. We are at the end of a session. We are at a time when, because of the terrorist attacks, emergencies have arisen that must be addressed. But now we find that everyone who has ever had a thought about where we ought to be spending more money wants to do it. I think we have to be a little more thoughtful about where we are.

We started out with a budget that we agreed upon. I think it was about \$660-some billion. Then that was changed at the request of the President some time ago to \$686 billion. In addition to that, of course, we have had another \$40 billion, and another \$5 billion, and agreed to guarantee another \$10 billion. So we have spent a great deal of money. I think we have ought to give some thought as to what our priorities are to be at this point.

It is my belief we could come up with a stimulus package that would deal with the needs of unemployment and some of the medical needs there. I think we could do something that is rather limited in terms of accelerated depreciation that would cause businesses to create jobs, which is what we want to do. We do not need to spend \$120 billion simply because we have an excuse to spend.

So I am hopeful that we can get together on a stimulus package. The majority leader said this morning the Republicans refuse to meet. That is not the case at all. The Republicans are not willing to have the Appropriations Committee be part of that meeting because it is a Finance Committee responsibility. That is where we ought to be; there is no question about that.

I hope we can take a little time now to say what our priorities should be. We need a little vision, just over 2 weeks. It ought not to be too difficult to decide what it is that we need to get done and step aside from some of these other questions.

We are talking about a farm bill. I am on the Agriculture Committee and

we have not even scored it. We don't know how much it will cost. Yet we are here. We want to get it on the floor. We have not had the farm bill before the committee, not even had a chance to look at it, but we were asked to mark it up. That is not the best way to deal with the important issues there. We can deal with them.

I am hopeful we will slow down just a moment, decide what it is that is most important for the country that we do in the very little time we have, and not just absolutely think we ought to be spending every dime we can possibly find. That is not necessarily the thing to do at this point.

Hopefully, we will be able to do that. I hope we can do at least those two things, the appropriations bills and the stimulus package. These other things ought to have a little more thought. We are going to be back next year, early. We can put a time certain on those and do them at that point.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Will the Senator withhold his suggestion of the absence of a quorum?

Mr. THOMAS. I withhold the request.

RECESS

Mr. THOMAS. If it would be more appropriate, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in recess until 2:15.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That would be appropriate.

The Chair thanks the Senator.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 12:25 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. NELSON of Florida).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee is recognized.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be given 15 minutes in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PROHIBITION OF HUMAN CLONING

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I rise to continue a discussion that began in morning business earlier today. That is on the issue of human cloning. I had not expected to be talking about this issue during the closing days of this session of Congress. But I feel compelled to do so in light of Sunday's announcement. That is indeed very troubling for everybody as they seek to understand what this is all about after Sunday's announcement that a U.S. company is pursuing the purposeful creation of cloned human embryos.

I believe all human cloning for scientific reasons, for ethical reasons, and for reasons surrounding the health and safety of women should be banned.

This whole subject of human cloning was the subject of a lot of discussion earlier this year. This summer, the House of Representatives passed a bill prohibiting the human cloning by a

large and overwhelming margin. But in light of the events of September 11, much of the discussion was put aside. A lot of that changed on Sunday. And now I believe it is incumbent upon the Senate to address this critical issue before adjourning for the year.

I urge the majority leader to call up the House bill and to allow the Senate to work its will on that bill. We don't have the luxury of time that I think many of us thought we had. If we look over the last several years—really beginning in 1997, when Scottish researchers first captured the attention of the world after they used the process called somatic cell nuclear transfer to successfully clone that adult sheep by the name of Dolly—since that period of time a lot has happened in this particular body. The portrayal of human cloning has intrigued our imagination over the last 4 to 5 years. But we all must recognize that this is serious business. The idea that cloning human beings may be technologically possible challenges our fundamental beliefs—whether they be spiritual, or whether they be moral. Those people who pay attention to science ask if it is really possible. I believe the answer is yes. But what it really causes us to do is to go back and challenge our fundamental beliefs on what the appropriate limits are or should be of human control over nature.

I tell you, as a scientist and as someone who has thought a lot about end-of-life issues or beginning-of-life issues and disease and health, it provokes, in me, a lot of concern in terms of the issues of how much to intervene, at what point, what is someone's motive, and can that motive be shifted in such a direction that the great promises of science can be used to the abuse of what most people would regard as their moral sensibilities.

After the Dolly announcement, we held a series of hearings in the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee. The first hearing focused on science. We had scientists testify. We looked at all types of cloning: Animal cloning, human cellular cloning, and the cloning of a human embryo, the cloning of human individuals.

At the second hearing we had ethicists and theological representatives come in. We listened to distinguished individuals testifying from the Christian faith, the Jewish traditions, the Islamic traditions, all relating to human cloning. We also listened to philosophers well schooled in biomedical ethics.

The story went on. The National Bioethics Advisory Committee (NBAC), at the request of President Clinton, looked at, studied, and made a report on the moral and ethical issues as well as the scientific standpoints. NBAC then reported to the President that reproductive cloning was unsafe and should be prohibited by Federal law.

About a year after that, Senator BOND and I, based on our hearings, and based on that National Bioethics Advi-

sory Committee report, introduced the Human Cloning Prohibition Act along with a number of our other colleagues. That bill would have prohibited the use of somatic cell nuclear transfer technology to produce a human embryo.

At the time—and the time today is very different; again, that was in 1998—the science of issues such as stem cell research, particularly embryonic stem cells, was all hypothetical. It was all theoretical. This whole field of embryonic stem cell research existed, but only as a hope of what might be. No research using embryonic stem cells had actually been conducted at the time.

The overall science of these issues, of cloning and stem cell research, was relatively undeveloped and even less understood. The bill got caught up in a lot of concerns that it could prevent this whole field of embryonic stem cell research from progressing, and the bill really fell by the wayside.

Indeed, almost 2 years would pass between the announcement of Dolly, the sheep, in 1997 and the groundbreaking reports on the successful isolation of what are called human pluripotent stem cells. It was 2 years after Dolly.

Now, more than 2 additional years past, the field of embryonic stem cell research has really made great strides, although it is still in its infancy, as we are seeing today. Today there are more than 60 established embryonic stem cell lines worldwide. The research, I believe, does show great promise for stem cell research as we look to the future.

We have also learned a lot about adult stem cells. Only recently people understood there are two—indeed, there are three—but two main types of stem cells: One is adult, and one is embryonic. A lot of our traditionally held beliefs about the adult stem cells, the fact that they can only go in one direction, have been modified as we have studied them scientifically. Now we know they are not restricted to one fate or one direction.

This past year, the NIH spent \$250 million on stem cell research. That number, I am quite certain, is going to grow in the future because of the promise of stem cell research for therapies for a range of diseases. That money will be spent for both adult stem cell and embryonic stem cell research.

I will say that overall stem cell research is in its very early stages and there is a lot to learn. I have just outlined what we have learned in the last 2 years, and in the 2 years prior to that from the time that Dolly was first cloned.

But what we can say now, with confidence, I believe, is that a ban on human cloning—again, we are talking about stem cells and human cloning—a ban on human cloning will not be a barrier in any way to the aggressive pursuit of embryonic or adult stem cell research. I would argue that it is just to the contrary of what some people say, that if you ban human cloning in some way it might slow down stem cell research.